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SUBJECT: AYMAN NOUR UPDATE

REF: CAIRO 976

Classified By: Economic-Political Counselor Catherine Hill-Herndon,
for reason 1.4 (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In recent meetings with imprisoned Al Ghad party leader Ayman Nour's lawyer and wife, we were told that, despite recent press reports indicating a deterioration in Nour's health, his health condition is "stable." Nour's wife asked that the USG continue to advocate for Nour's release, and also that the U.S. push for him to be moved from his current prison to a hospital. End summary.

¶2. (C) In a May 18 meeting with Nour's long-time lawyer, Amir Salem (protect), Salem said that Nour's health is "very ok" and that "nothing has changed from several months ago." Commenting on recent press reports about a deterioration in Nour's health, Salem said that Nour "cries wolf" too often. Salem mentioned that he had heard from GOE contacts that parliamentary speaker Fathi Surour was unhappy with Nour's criticism of him in the Egyptian media, but that Nour refused to take Salem's advice to "tone it down for a while," and continued to target Surour in his frequent commentaries in the opposition Al Dustour newspaper. (Note: Per reftel, in a May 8 meeting, Surour also told the Ambassador of his upset at Nour's public criticism of him).

¶3. (C) Nour's wife Gameela Ismail, in a May 19 meeting, said that Nour is suffering from abscesses on his hands, but did not say that his health has taken a precipitous turn for the worse (as she was quoted as saying in recent media reports). Ismail noted that four doctors (among them two cardiac specialists) have not been allowed into Torah prison to examine Nour, despite her repeated requests. Ismail said that Nour and she have "lost hope" for Nour being released on Egypt's July 23 or October 6 holidays. She highlighted a recent Al Ahram newspaper article which specified that the holiday amnesties will not include forgers, the crime for which Nour was sentenced. Ismail said that Al Ghad party (Nour wing) president Ehab El Khouly had been contacted one and a half months ago by Fathi Surour, who allegedly told him that, "You can tell your friend Nour that the Americans no longer care about him, and do not even raise his being released in meetings with us." We assured Ismail that was not the case, and that the USG continues, at senior levels, to advocate for Nour's release. Ismail, weeping, asked that the USG continue to quietly push for Nour's release, but if that does not happen, that we urge the GOE to move him from the prison to a hospital, "so at least he can get adequate medical care."
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